

Abbreviated Summary of Public Hearing Comments on the CALFED Draft Programmatic EIS/EIR .

Sixteen Public Hearings were held. About 2630 people attended and around 760 offered comments. The largest groups attendance wise, were in Visalia (430) and Stockton (300) and the largest groups making presentations, were in Sacramento (83), Chico (77) and Oakland (76). One site (Los Banos) was added after the hearings started.

All comments were transcribed at each Public Hearing. The Program will respond to the Public Hearing comments, as well as the written comments on the draft, in a "Response to Comments" document. The "Response to Comments" document will be available with the Final Programmatic EIS/EIR in April, 2000.

The three major interests groups (agriculture, urban and environmental) offered the following comments at the Public Hearings.

Overall Comments

Agriculture

- The potential loss of agricultural land and water is unacceptable. These losses have repercussions across local, regional, state, national and world economies. Substantial social impacts among the local "agriculture dependent" communities were also noted. CALFED needs to look at an alternative which has less impacts on agriculture. Clearly defined mitigation measures are necessary to offset the adverse impacts to agriculture.
- Agriculture is working hard to conserve as much water as possible. However, additional water storage, both groundwater and surface, are needed to meet projected population needs for food and fiber.

Urban

- There is a lack of commitment to improve water quality and reliability and to increase water supply. Need a verifiable increase in supply and quality if Southern California is going to support the Program.
- Need to establish a specific schedule for achievement of water quality and salinity targets and establish water quality performance milestones.
- There must be a commitment to an Endangered Species no-surprise policy, i.e., a "deal is a deal" regulatory assurance for water users to insure against further erosion of water supplies.
- Urban areas have been practicing extensive conservation, however additional storage will be needed to meet ever increasing populations.

Environmental

- There is a lack of serious water conservation in the plan. The program needs to include a "soft path" solution. Need to price water correctly if conservation is going to work.
- The proposed North Delta Diversion is the first step in building a Peripheral Canal. This facility as well as the P.C. should be deleted from further consideration.
- The Program should not construct new dams. Seems ludicrous to propose as a solution the very thing (dams) that caused the problems.



Local Comments

- At Stockton there was substantial concern about the South Delta bundle particularly the delayed decision on a Grant Line Canal barrier and that the potential North Delta diversion is the beginning of the Peripheral Canal.
- At Los Banos, agricultural commentators stressed that CALFED should find a way to restore westside water reallocated because of biological opinions and CVPIA.
- In Visalia, agricultural commentators stressed that the Program lacked balance, i.e. the Program is very specific about and going forward with a multitude of ERP actions, the ERP will impact hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural land, a large part of the funding is for ERP and 750K AF of water are identified for the ERP whereas items key to agriculture such as surface storage are quite nebulous and storage efforts in the first 7 years consist of just studies, funding is minimal and the water for ERP is coming once again from agriculture.
- In both Visalia and Los Banos, agricultural commentators expressed concern that the Preferred Program Alternative did not have an around-the-Delta conveyance facility.
- In Chico, rural landowners expressed concerns about the merits of groundwater storage and water transfers.
- Agricultural interests in Salinas and Santa Rosa questioned why they were part of CALFED's Solution Area. Concerned that the "government" was going to take their water and land.
- The Bay area environmental commentators (Oakland and San Jose) have asked when the Program will deal with the "Bay" part of the Bay-Delta Program.
- Southern California urban commentators believe CALFED has abandoned the conveyance facility (Peripheral Canal).
- Environmental Justice (EJ) comments were noted in Salinas, Oakland and Antioch. They requested CALFED take a closer look at consequences to minority groups and communities; that EJ groups be funded so they can participate in the Program, and that BDAC include a member that would speak for EJ issues.